

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3416

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SDEU, SHUM, SF

SUBJECT: TRANSVAAL ADMINISTRATOR WARNS CATHOLICS
AGAINST SCHOOL INTEGRATION

REF: CAPE TOWN 1090; CAPE TOWN 224

1. ON JUNE 7, TRANSVAAL ADMINISTRATOR, SYBRAND VAN NIEKERK, WARNED CATHOLIC AND OTHER PRIVATE SCHOOLS THAT THEY FACED SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES IF THEY PERSISTED IN DEFYING THE LAW AND ADMITTED BLACK CHILDREN. SPEAKING IN THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL BUDGET DEBATE, VAN NIEKERK SAID THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD ALLOWED SOME CHILDREN TO REMAIN ENROLLED IN THE CHURCH SCHOOLS LAST YEAR BUT NOW MORE BLACKS WERE BEING ADMITTED. HE SAID THAT "SCHOOLS THAT BELIEVE WE WILL CONTINUE TO CLOSE OUR EYES TO THEIR BREAKING THE LAW ARE EXPECTING TOO MUCH. TO FORCE INTEGRATION ON SCHOOLS SIMPLY CANNOT SUCCEED. EACH GROUP MUST HAVE ITS OWN
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UNIQUE SYSTEM--BE TAUGHT IN ITS OWN PATTERN, WITH ITS OWN HISTORY AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND--AND IT IS IRRESPONSIBLE TO AGITATE FOR INTEGRATED EDUCATION. THIS COULD ONLY HARM THE CHILDREN." VAN NIEKERK WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE FELT BODIES WORKING FOR SCHOOL INTEGRATION HAD "MOTIVES OTHER THAN EDUCATIONAL." ON JUNE 14, VAN NIEKERK REITERATED HIS STAND, SAYING

THAT CERTAIN OPPOSITION MEMBERS MAY FEEL THAT HE WILL MODIFY HIS POSITION LATER, BUT "I CAN GIVE YOU THE ASSURANCE THAT THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN." VAN NIEKERK ADDED THAT HE WAS ACTING COMPLETELY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OFFICIAL POLICY.

2. AS REPORTED REFTTEL B, THE SAG HAS TRIED TO COMPROMISE ON THIS THORNY ISSUE BY GIVING THE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATORS THE POWER TO DECIDE. SOURCES WITHIN THE CHURCH HAVE TOLD US THAT THIS DECISION BY THE SAG TO LEAVE POWER AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL MAY REFLECT NOT ONLY THE STRIDENT CONSERVATISM OF THE TRANSVAAL ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE BUT ITS LEVERAGE WITHIN PARTY CIRCLES AS WELL. KOORNHOF, WHO MET WITH CATHOLIC ADMINISTRATORS AND LEADERS AGAIN IN APRIL, IS OBVIOUSLY SYMPATHETIC BUT DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY CAUCUS TO ALLOW HIM TO CHALLENGE VAN NIEKERK.

3. WITH THIS SITUATION PREVELANT, IT APPEARS THAT THE CAPE AND NATAL PROVINCES WILL GO AHEAD QUIETLY WITH THEIR PRIVATE SCHOOL INTEGRATION WHILE THE TRANSVAAL STEADFASTLY REFUSES. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY PUPILS ARE INVOLVED IN THE TRANSVAAL, BUT CHURCH SOURCES SAY THAT THERE ARE 200 NEW APPLICATIONS THAT HAVE STILL NOT BEEN ACTED ON.
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VAN NIEKERK MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WILL NOT ACT ON NEW APPLICATIONS IN THE FUTURE AND MAY WELL RESCIND OLD ONES WHEN HE TOLD THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL THAT HE SAW NOTHING "SPECIAL" IN CASES WHERE THE CHILDREN WERE QUALIFIED AND THE PARENTS COULD AFFORD A PRIVATE SCHOOL BUT THEY WERE NOT DIPLOMATS OR OTHER ALIEN RESIDENTS USED TO THAT TYPE OF EDUCATION.

4. THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME HOPE EARLIER THAT THE SITUATION MIGHT DRIFT ON UNDISTURBED FOR SOME TIME AND QUIETLY DEFUSE. BUT, AS REF B STATED, CHURCH OFFICIALS KNEW THAT CONFRONTATION WOULD EVENTUALLY COME ON THIS ISSUE. IT APPEARS THAT VAN NIEKERK HAS NOW DECIDED TO THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET. THE RESULTS COULD BE DISASTROUS, AS THE CHURCH SEEMS ADAMANT ON HOLDING ITS GROUND AND VAN NIEKERK IS JUST AS STUBBORN ON THE OTHER SIDE AND THE ONLY FINAL OUTCOME, WITHOUT COMPROMISE, WILL BE THE CLOSING OF THE SCHOOLS. KOORNHOF SEEMS UNABLE TO PUT ANY FURTHER PRESSURE ON VAN NIEKERK TO EASE HIS STAND WITHOUT GREATER CABINET BACKING. THE OUTCOME WILL, THEREFORE, DEMONSTRATE MUCH AS TO THE CABINET'S REAL

ATTITUTDES AND THE POWER WIELDED BY THE TRANSVAAL
PARTY STRUCTURE WITHIN THE NATIONAL CAUCUS.
EDMONDSON

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